



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

ART. VII. — *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed, Military Secretary of Washington at Cambridge; Adjutant-General of the Continental Army; Member of the Congress of the United States; and President of the Executive Council of the State of Pennsylvania.* By his Grandson, WILLIAM B. REED. Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston. 1847. 2 vols. 8vo.

MR. WILLIAM B. REED is favorably known to our readers and to the literary and general public. Among our scholars and orators he occupies a distinguished rank. Not merely by the volumes before us, but by other elegant and excellent productions, he has added to the lustre of an honored parentage and name. Several of his addresses on literary and historical occasions have been published, and are of permanent interest and value. The Discourse delivered before the New York Historical Society, in December, 1839, entitled *The Infancy of the Union*, conveys, in a short compass, more important instruction in illustration of our history than can be gleaned from many bulky volumes. Its object is to trace the origin and growth of the social union of the Colonies, preceding, and in fact, from the very first, preparing the way for, the political and national union which the Revolution and Federal Constitution fully developed and consummated.

Before proceeding to notice particularly the literary execution and historical value of the volumes before us, it will be proper to refresh the recollections of our readers relating to the life and character of their subject.

Joseph Reed was born in Trenton, in the then British Province of New Jersey, on the 27th of August, 1741. His family was of Irish origin and respectable standing, his father being actively engaged in commercial pursuits. No pains or expense were spared in the education of the son. He took his Bachelor's degree at Princeton College in October, 1757, delivering on the occasion an oration in Latin, which is still preserved. After pursuing the study of the law, under the care of Richard Stockton, he was admitted to the bar, in May, 1763. He immediately sailed for England, where he completed his legal education in the Middle Temple, continuing there about two years. In the

spring of 1765, he returned to America, and entered upon the practice of law in Trenton. He succeeded, in a very short time, to a large business, and attained a commanding rank in his profession. In December, 1769, his father died, and early the next spring he embarked for England, to fulfil a matrimonial engagement contracted during his residence in the Middle Temple. In May, 1770, he was married, at St. Luke's Church, in the city of London, to Esther De Berdt, daughter of Dennis De Berdt, an eminent merchant, and at one time Agent for the Province of Massachusetts Bay. On returning to America, he removed from Trenton to Philadelphia, where his talents and accomplishments commanded high professional and social distinction.

In 1772, Lord Dartmouth succeeded Lord Hillsborough as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Between Lord Dartmouth and Mr. De Berdt a personal and confidential intimacy existed, which, on the death of the latter, was continued in the person of his son. Through the agency of Mr. De Berdt, junior, a correspondence was brought about between Lord Dartmouth and Mr. Reed. On the 4th of January, 1772, Mr. Reed wrote to his brother-in-law to the following effect.

“I have often had thoughts of making his Lordship a tender of my services in pointing out some things which would be of mutual advantage to both countries, and tend to make his administration honorable and useful. But the difficulty of introducing it in a proper manner, and free from any suspicion of interested views, has hitherto prevented it. The intelligence from this country has generally flowed through such corrupt channels as would expose any minister to danger and difficulty. I think I could procure his Lordship one or two correspondents in other Provinces, who would, if it was agreeable, render him any services in that way, and who have nothing to ask from him but his cheerful acceptance of their honest and disinterested endeavours to serve both the mother country and the Colonies.” — Vol. I., p. 49.

It was signified that such communications would be agreeable to his Lordship. The correspondence that ensued is exceedingly interesting and valuable. Mr. Reed's position as an active and, although quite young, a prominent assertor of Colonial rights, his sincere and earnest desire to obtain from ministerial and imperial concession the redress and securities

which the Colonies demanded, his finished education, extensive and elevated connections, acquaintances, and correspondents in both countries, his incomparable facility and elegance of style, and the liberal, enlightened, and well-tempered tone of his spirit, qualified him to perform the delicate and responsible part on which he had ventured, of conveying to the ministry a fair and candid, a just and fearless account of the condition and progress of the controversy in the Colonies. When we consider how fully the government were apprised of the strength, extent, and depth of the popular excitement by the letters of Mr. Reed, it is more unaccountable that they persisted in the policy which finally resulted in the loss of their colonial empire in America. Indeed, their management of the dispute, and of the war to which it led, exhibits a strange blindness and fatuity. From the beginning to the end, there was what in popular parlance is sometimes called "a run of ill-luck" in the measures of the ministry, and, as the great master of human nature has observed, when the current of circumstances is adverse, reason loses its discernment, and the mind its guiding light ;

"Men's judgments are  
A parcel of their fortunes."

The first letter of Mr. Reed to Lord Dartmouth commenced thus :—

*Philadelphia, December 22d, 1773.*

"My Lord,—The present state of public affairs in this part of America so nearly affects the ease and honor of your administration, that I cannot but think it my duty on this occasion to break through the common forms which your Lordship's rank and my own respect would prescribe, and endeavour to inform you truly and faithfully of our present views and situation."—Vol. I., p. 51.

Five days afterwards he wrote again, informing him of the proceedings in Philadelphia, of the populace compelling the master of a tea-ship, when supplied by them with provisions and other necessaries for the voyage, upon two hours' notice, to return to England without starting a box of his cargo.

"As it may be of importance to your Lordship not only to be made acquainted with facts, but with the circumstances, rank, and character of those who promote this opposition, it would be improper for me to conceal that it has originated and been con-

ducted by some of the principal inhabitants, and I may safely say countenanced and encouraged by all, as there has not been a single publication, nor have I heard one person speak, in favor of the measure.

"Your Lordship will judge from these facts how general and unanimous the opinion is, that no article subject to a duty, for the purpose of raising revenue, ought to be received in America. Nor is it confined to this city; your Lordship will see by the papers herewith, that the same opposition is made at New York, Charleston, and Boston, and you may rely upon it, the same idea prevails throughout the country. Any further attempt to enforce this act, I am humbly of opinion, must end in blood. . . . .

"Your Lordship's goodness will, I hope, excuse my pleading for the country I love. But as on the one hand I will not conceal or misrepresent, so on the other I would wish to avert the impending blow." — Vol. I., pp. 54 – 56.

On the 10th of June, 1774, he wrote as follows : —

"The engagement I have made to give your Lordship a faithful account of the transactions in this city and Province, in the distant hope that my communications may be of some use, induces me still to trouble you. My opportunities are such as no officer of government can have, and as I have the most passionate and sincere desire to see a reconciliation between the mother country and the Colonies take place, I shall continue writing until I find it disagreeable to your Lordship, hoping, I confess, that I may contribute, in some small degree, to enable your Lordship to judge with precision, and point out some mode by which these unhappy disputes may be terminated to the satisfaction of both parties. . . . .

"Your Lordship, I think, may consider it as a fixed truth, that all the dreadful consequences of civil war will ensue before the Americans will submit to the claim of taxation by Parliament; I mention this that your Lordship may not be deluded by the suggestions of designing, interested people." — Vol. I., pp. 68 – 70.

In a letter of July 25th, he alludes to his own agency in the patriotic movements.

"Though I have had some share in the transactions in this city, I assure your Lordship it has been with reluctance, and if I could be convinced that submission to the claims of Parliament did not virtually and necessarily imply a surrender both for myself and my children of the blessings of liberty, I should have borne testimony against some of the measures pursued. I am sure I speak not only my own sentiments, but the sentiments

of the most respectable in this city, when I say that there is nothing they so much lament as these unhappy differences, and that they will rejoice to see the old union and affection restored." — Vol. 1., p. 72.

A letter of September 25th exhibits the manliness of his tone, and the elevation of his principles, as a British and an American patriot.

"Your Lordship is pleased to say 'that government has no intention to enslave the people of America, but to allow them all the freedom consistent with their connection with the parent state.' If we are to be thus free, should it not have been distinguished in what instances our freedom is inconsistent with our connection, that, as reasonable beings, we might be convinced of the necessity and propriety of being less free than our brethren landholders in Britain? In my poor judgment, the declaratory law, and the acts passed respecting Boston, which are streams from the same fountain, degrade us from the scale of freedom; the former, indeed, does not agree with your Lordship's ideas of American liberty, which you think should be only partially restrained. Whereas this law is a general restraint, enacted by a power wholly independent of us, and binding us in all cases whatsoever. A gentle tyranny is no more compatible with the rights of an English subject, than a violent one." — Vol. 1., p. 77.

The following description of the Congress which met in Philadelphia, September 1st, 1774, and of the state of feeling then pervading the people, takes its place as part of the record on the permanent pages of American history.

"The Congress met here on the 1st of September, consisting of delegates from all the colonies, from New Hampshire to South Carolina inclusive, in all about fifty-two. They opened the meeting with great solemnity, and chose the Speaker of Virginia their Chairman, or President. They concluded their deliberations should be secret, which rule they observed until the publication of the inclosed papers. We only know that as yet great unanimity of sentiment prevails, and that a very large committee is engaged in stating the rights of an American subject. There are among them many persons of excellent sense and great abilities. The Boston delegates, who are critically situated, act with uncommon prudence and discretion; they speak with much respect of your Lordship, and impute the loss of your protection to the misrepresentations of their enemies. But what shall I say to your Lordship of the appearances in this country? What seemed a little time since to be a spark which might with pru-

dence have been extinguished, is now a flame which threatens ruin to both the parent and the child. The spirit of the people gradually rose when it might have been expected to decline, till the Quebec Bill added fuel to the fire. Then all those deliberate measures of petitioning previous to opposition were laid aside, as inadequate to the apprehended mischief and danger, and now the people are generally ripe for any plan the Congress advise, should it be war itself. I can hardly think that I am in the same place and among the same people, so great is the alteration of sentiment. As far as I can judge, should the merchants hesitate to comply with any suspension of trade the Congress direct, the people of the country will compel them, and I know no power capable to protect them. A few days ago we were alarmed with a report that General Gage had cannonaded the town of Boston. So general a resentment, amounting even to fury, appeared everywhere, that I firmly believe, if it had not been contradicted, thousands would have gone, at their own expense, to have joined in the revenge. It was difficult to make them doubt the intelligence, or delay setting out. Those who served in the last war in the Provincial troops, others discharged from the regulars, and many who have seen service in Germany, and migrated to this country, with such others as would have joined them, would have formed from the best accounts a considerable body. I believe, had the news proved true, an army of forty thousand men, well provided with every thing except cannon, would before this have been on its march to Boston. From these appearances, and the decided language of all ranks of people, I am convinced, my Lord, that if blood be once spilled, we shall be involved in all the horrors of a civil war. Unacquainted either from history or experience with the calamities incident to such a state, with minds full of resentment at the severity of the Mother Country, and stung with the contempt with which their petitions have always been received, the Americans are determined to risk all the consequences." — Vol. I., p. 78.

The last letter to Lord Dartmouth is dated February 10th, 1775, and concludes with the following decisive sentiment : —

"This country will be deluged with blood, before it will submit to any other taxation than by their own legislature." — Vol. I., p. 95.

The current of events grew more and more rapid every hour. The war broke out, a Continental army was organized. General Washington, on his way to the camp in Cambridge, prevailed upon Mr. Reed to accompany him from Phila-

delphia ; and on the 4th of July, 1775, he was announced, in the General Orders, as Secretary to the Commander-in-chief.

No American patriot of that day had been more desirous to avoid the terrible and desperate issue of blood to which the controversy with the mother country had been brought by the obstinacy of ministers, but no one was more resolutely and deeply fixed in the determination to abide that issue, than Joseph Reed ; and when he attached himself to the military family of Washington, he knew the perils of the position. In a letter to a friend he said, —

“ I have no inclination to be hanged for half treason. When a subject draws his sword against his prince, he must cut his way through, if he means afterwards to sit down in safety. I have taken too active a part in what may be called the civil part of opposition, to renounce without disgrace the public cause, when it seems to lead to danger, and have a most sovereign contempt for the man who can plan measures he has not spirit to execute.” — Vol. I., pp. 105, 106.

His education, talents, and energy of character were fully appreciated by Washington, and the services he rendered can be estimated only by an analysis of the correspondence conducted from head-quarters, by his aid and that of others. While Washington himself had a facility, purity, elegance, and dignity of style, which never suffered in comparison with the higher abilities of any who were associated with him at any period of his career, civil or military, he was particularly careful and skilful in the selection of the persons who were to share with him the labors of the pen. Mr. Reed from his early youth was an admirable writer, and his letters and official papers are models of their kind. In a mere literary point of view they will suffer from no criticism, but are marked with a freedom, fluency, and force rendering them interesting and instructive in the highest degree. Whatever events he described, or topics he treated, will not require to be cast into a new mould, but may be transferred at once to the use of the historian.

Indeed, it is the peculiar charm of the history of the American Revolution, that it will hereafter be invested with the interest of a drama, because it will have the form and the spirit of the drama. It will not be a narrative related by another, but a story told by the actors themselves, passing,



as it were, in very life across the stage. History in reference to most other epochs is a decoction of the lees of events and characters, selected by the arbitrary, prejudiced, and necessarily limited judgments of writers distant from the scene and the period, and boiled down into a reduced and confused compound. The filial affection and honorable ancestral pride of the descendants of the men of the Revolution, and the gratitude and enlightened patriotism of public bodies, are faithfully and busily recovering from decay and oblivion the memorials of the great actors in that struggle, and, by such publications as the one before us, are securing to them a brighter and more worthy fate. Heroes and sages are thus restored to living action, and as we read their letters, written from day to day and from hour to hour, the grand movement again and for ever passes before our eyes. Much has already been done, and much more will be done ; and when all that now slumbers in decaying manuscripts shall have received imperishable life from the press, the historian will be prepared to execute his office in a shape and with a spirit that will transcend all the forms in which genius and eloquence have heretofore attempted to perpetuate the knowledge of events. By a judicious and discriminating use of the materials thus provided, the immortal chieftain in that war of liberty, the Father of his country, and his associates in the camp and the cabinet, will enact their own parts, and the reader see and hear all that they did and suffered. The whole will be radiant with the interest which, at the time, belonged to the fearful risks, the exhausting toils, the anxious doubts, and glowing hopes, and triumphant rejoicings and plaudits, which alternately spread their clouds, and diffused their sunshine, from the beginning to the end of that long and eventful day of trial and of glory.

The *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed* is an invaluable contribution to these living resources of our history. Not only does he tell his own story, and that of the Revolutionary struggle so far as he was connected with it, but he brings before us, in the same original vividness of delineation, many others of the great spirits of the day and the scene. There are letters from Generals Greene and Wayne especially, which present those two heroes and patriots to our imaginations and our hearts with an attractiveness which no description by a third person could possibly reach. Of General

St. Clair we had failed to receive any distinct or particularly interesting impression before ; but there is one letter from him, in these volumes, which will make us love and honor his memory for ever.

During the latter part of October, 1775, Mr. Reed returned to Philadelphia. In the ensuing year he was elected to the Assembly of Pennsylvania. In May, 1776, Congress, at the express desire of General Washington, appointed him Adjutant-General, and the following extract from a letter to his wife shows the grounds of his acceptance of that office.

“ You will be surprised, but I hope not dejected, when I tell you that a great revolution has happened in my prospects and views. Yesterday the General sent for me, and in a very obliging manner pressed me to accept the office of Adjutant-General, which General Gates lately filled. The proposition was new and surprising, so that I requested till this day to consider of it. I objected my want of military knowledge, but several members of Congress and the General treated it so lightly, and in short said so many things, that I have consented to go. I have been much induced to this measure by observing that this Province will be a great scene of party and contention this summer. The Courts are stopped, consequently no business done in my profession, and at all events my time so engrossed that I have not a moment to devote to keeping up my stock or adding to my law knowledge. The appointments of the office are equal to £ 700 per annum, which will help to support us till these calamitous times are at an end. Besides, this post is honorable, and if the issue is favorable to America, must put me on a respectable scale. Should it be otherwise, I have done enough to expose myself to ruin. I have endeavoured to act for the best, and hope you will think so.” — Vol. I., p. 190.

General Reed shared actively and prominently in all the dangers, disappointments, and distresses of the ensuing campaign, from the battle of Long Island with its train of disastrous consequences, to the evacuation of New York, the skirmishes that succeeded, the battle of White Plains, the loss of Fort Washington, and the retreat through the Jerseys, — that darkest hour of the Revolution. In these and all subsequent scenes of his military experience, he proved himself a brave, active, and skilful officer. His courage rose to the height of romantic intrepidity, and eminently fitted him for perilous adventures, daring *reconnoissances*, and desperate

encounters. During the war, his horse was three times shot under him. One of the instances he thus relates :—

“ Just after I had sealed my letter to you, and sent it away, an account came that the enemy were advancing upon us in three large columns. We have so many false reports, that I desired the General to permit me to go and discover what truth there was in the account. I went down to our most advanced post, and while talking there with the officer of the guard, the enemy's advanced guard fired upon us at about fifty yards' distance — our men behaved well, stood, and returned the fire, till, overpowered by numbers, they were obliged to retreat. The enemy advanced upon us very fast. I had not quitted the house five minutes before they were in possession of it. Finding how things were, I went over to the General to get some support for the brave fellows who had behaved so well. By the time I got there, the enemy appeared in open view and sounded their bugles in a most insulting manner, as is usual after a fox-chase. I never felt such a sensation before — it seemed to crown our disgrace. The General was prevailed upon to order out a party to attack them, and as I had been upon the ground, which no one else had, it fell to me to conduct them. . . . In a few minutes our brave fellows mounted up the rocks, and attacked the enemy with great spirit. At the same time some of our troops, in another quarter, moved up towards the enemy, and the action began. Major Leitch fell near me, in a few minutes, with three balls through him. . . . Colonel Knowlton, a brave Connecticut officer, also fell mortally wounded. I mounted him on my horse and brought him off. In about ten minutes, our people pressing on with great ardor, the enemy gave way and left us the ground, which was strewn pretty thick with dead, chiefly the enemy, though it since turns out our loss is also considerable. Our greatest loss is poor Knowlton, whose name and spirit ought to be immortal. I assisted him off, and when gasping in the agonies of death, all his inquiry was if we had driven in the enemy. The pursuit of a flying enemy was so new a scene, that it was with difficulty our men could be brought to retreat, which they did in very good order. We buried the dead and brought off the wounded on both sides, as far as our troops had pursued. We have since learned that the main body of the enemy was hastily advancing, so that in all probability there would have been a reverse of things, if the pursuit had not been given over.

“ You can hardly conceive the change it has made in our army. The men have recovered their spirits and feel a confidence which before they had quite lost. I hope the effects will

be lasting. You will probably hear from other quarters of the double escape I had. My own horse not being at hand when the alarm was first given, I borrowed one from a young Philadelphian. He received a shot just behind his fore-shoulder, which narrowly missed my leg. I am told he is since dead ; but the greatest was from one of our own rascals, who was running away. Upon my driving him back, he presented his piece and snapped it at me at about a rod distance. I seized a musket from another soldier, and snapped at him ; he had the same good luck. He has since been tried, and is now under sentence of death ; but I believe I must beg him off, as after I found I could not get the gun off, I wounded him on the head, and cut off his thumb with my hanger. I suppose many persons will think it was rash and imprudent in officers of our rank to go into such an action. General Putnam, General Greene, many of the General's family, Mr. Tilghman, &c., were in it, but it was really to animate the troops, who were quite dispirited, and would not go into danger unless their officers led the way." — Vol. i., pp. 237, 238.

It was during this campaign that General Reed became embarrassed by an entanglement into which he was drawn in a correspondence with General Charles Lee, occasioned by the loss of Fort Washington. It was the opinion of many of Washington's military council that the attempt to hold that place ought not to have been made. This was the judgment, it was understood, of the Commander-in-chief himself, who was supposed to have been overruled by others, especially by the influence of General Greene. Several times during the war, at the battle of Germantown, for instance, as well as on this occasion, Washington incurred the censure of some of his associates, particularly among the younger and more inconsiderate officers, by attaching, as they thought, too much weight to the opinions of others, against his own better judgment. As, in the lapse of time, the evidence arising from the publication of original documents increases, the wisdom and greatness of Washington become vindicated. He often had reasons which the necessities of his position forbade his disclosing to any, even to his most confidential subordinates. With a sublime magnanimity, he silently endured reproach, not only from enemies, but from his nearest and most devoted friends, rather than jeopard the cause of the country by producing his justification. Reed was unhappily and imprudently ensnared into an interchange of letters with Lee, which, for a time,

exposed him to the imputation of sympathizing with the manner in which that officer censured the Commander-in-chief for having sacrificed Fort Washington and its brave garrison. An explanation shortly afterwards took place between the adjutant-general and his chief, most honorable to them both, and their former friendship and confidence were entirely restored.

The reasons which induced the Commander-in-chief to hold on to Fort Washington are thus stated by him in a letter to Reed, written a few years afterwards.

“The loss of Fort Washington, simply abstracted from the circumstances which attended it, was an event that gave me much pain, because it deprived the army of the services of many valuable men at a critical period, and the public of many valuable lives, by the cruelties which were inflicted upon them in their captive state. But this concern received additional poignancy from two considerations, which were but little known; some of them will never be known to the world, because I shall never attempt to palliate my own foibles by exposing the error of another; nor indeed could either of them come before the public, unless there had been such a charge as must have rendered an inquiry into the causes of this miscarriage necessary. The one was a non-compliance in General Greene with an order sent to him from White Plains, before I marched for the western side of Hudson's River, to withdraw the artillery and stores from the Fort; allowing him, however, some latitude for the exercise of his own judgment, as he was upon the spot, and could decide better, from appearances and circumstances, than I, the propriety of a total evacuation. The other was a Resolve of Congress, in these emphatical words: ‘October 11th, 1776. — Resolved: That General Washington be desired, if it be practicable, by every art, and at whatever expense, to obstruct effectually the navigation of the North River, between Fort Washington and Mount Constitution, as well to prevent the regress of the enemy's frigates lately gone up, as to hinder them from receiving succour.’

“When I came to Fort Lee, and found no measures taken towards an evacuation, in consequence of the order before mentioned; when I found General Greene, of whose judgment and candor I entertained a good opinion, decidedly opposed to it; when I found other opinions coincident with his; when the wishes of Congress to obstruct the navigation of the North River, which were delivered in such forcible terms to me, recurred; when I knew that the easy communication between the different

parts of the army, then separated by the river, depended upon it; and, lastly, when I considered that our policy led us to waste the campaign without coming to a general action on the one hand, or suffering the enemy to overrun the country on the other, I conceived that every impediment which stood in their way was a means to answer these purposes; and when thrown into the scale with those opinions, which were opposed to an evacuation, caused that warfare in my mind, and hesitation, which ended in the loss of the garrison; and, being repugnant to my own judgment of the advisableness of attempting to hold the post, filled me with the greater regret. The two great causes, which led to this misfortune, and which I have before recited, as well perhaps as my reasoning upon it, which occasioned the delay, being concealed from public view, of course left the field of censure quite open for any and every laborer, who inclined to work in it; and afforded a fine theme for the pen of a malignant writer who is always less regardful of facts than the point he wants to establish, where he has the field wholly to himself, where concealment of a few circumstances will answer his purpose, or where a small transposition of them will give a very different complexion to the same transaction."— Vol. I., pp. 263, 264.

It is due to General Reed to observe, that, whatever he may have written or said to Lee or others, it could not have been in stronger or plainer terms than he used to Washington himself. The following passages are from a letter, dated December 22d, 1776, just before the glorious affair at Trenton, by which the dying hopes of America were revived, and an impression made that secured the final triumph of the cause. Washington was already, it is believed, meditating the enterprise, which, four nights afterwards, he carried into effect with a heroism and energy never surpassed.

"We are all of opinion, my dear General, that something must be attempted to revive our expiring credit, give our cause some degree of reputation, and prevent a total depreciation of the Continental money, which is coming on very fast; that even a failure cannot be more fatal, than to remain in our present situation; in short, some enterprise must be undertaken in our present circumstances, or we must give up the cause. In a little time the Continental army will be dissolved. The militia must be taken before their spirits and patience are exhausted; and the scattered, divided state of the enemy affords us a fair opportunity

of trying what our men will do, when called to an offensive attack. Will it not be possible, my dear General, for your troops, or such part of them as can act with advantage, to make a diversion, or something more, at or about Trenton? . . . . .

*"Allow me to hope that you will consult your own good judgment and spirit, and not let the goodness of your heart subject you to the influence of opinions from men in every respect your inferiors. . . . . I will not disguise my own sentiments, that our cause is desperate and hopeless, if we do not take the opportunity of the collection of troops at present, to strike some stroke. Our affairs are hastening fast to ruin if we do not retrieve them by some happy event. Delay with us is now equal to a total defeat. Be not deceived, my dear General, with small, flattering appearances; we must not suffer ourselves to be lulled into security and inaction, because the enemy does not cross the river. It is but a reprieve; the execution is the more certain, for I am very clear that they can and will cross the river, in spite of any opposition we can give them.*

*"Pardon the freedom I have used. The love of my country, a wife and four children in the enemy's hands, the respect and attachment I have to you, the ruin and poverty that must attend me and thousands of others, will plead my excuse for so much freedom."* — Vol. I., pp. 272, 273.

Immediately upon receiving the letter which contained these remarkable passages, Washington sent for Reed, and communicated to him the outlines of the contemplated attack on Trenton. The language we have quoted, particularly that in *Italics*, demonstrates the frankness and faithfulness of the writer, and the fact that it was kindly and respectfully received illustrates the true greatness of him to whom it was addressed. In the consultations, *reconnoissances*, and gallant achievements connected with the battles of Trenton and Princeton, General Reed bore an important and conspicuous part.

On the 12th of May, 1777, he was elected by Congress a brigadier-general, and it was designed to commit to him the command of the entire cavalry forces of the army; but he declined the appointment, as he did also, about the same time, that of Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, his nomination having been the first made under the new government of that State. He had previously resigned the office of adjutant-general, in which he was succeeded by Timothy Pickering. Ever after this he declined all permanent appointments in the

army, but served, wherever danger threatened or opportunities of usefulness offered, as a volunteer. On the 14th of September, 1777, he was elected by the Pennsylvania Assembly a delegate to Congress.

In the summer of 1778, Lord Carlisle, Mr. Eden, and Governor Johnstone arrived, with conciliatory propositions from the mother country. Whatever might have been the effect, at an earlier stage of the conflict, and under more favorable circumstances, of the concessions and assurances then offered, the measure was utterly baffled, and involved in irretrievable and exasperating failure, by an attempt, on the part of one of the British commissioners, to employ bribery. Governor Johnstone, through the agency of a Mrs. Ferguson, a mutual acquaintance, proposed to General Reed inducements of personal and private advantage. He was offered ten thousand guineas, and any office in British America. The answer, instantly and indignantly made to the glittering but base proposal, will carry down the name of Joseph Reed with the brightest lustre to all future ages : — “ *I am not worth purchasing, but such as I am, the king of Great Britain is not rich enough to buy me.* ”

On the 1st of December, 1778, he was unanimously chosen by the Assembly of Pennsylvania President of that State, in which office he was continued by annual reëlection as long as the constitutional limit allowed, until December, 1781. No one, who does not study the evidence contained in this work, can estimate the importance to the American cause of the services rendered during these years by President Reed. Pennsylvania, besides being more than any other State the centre and heart of the war, was particularly embarrassed and distressed by peculiar social and local difficulties. Evils arising from its proprietary institutions, and, for political and military purposes, the unmanageable character and notions of a large part of its population, placed obstacles in the way of administering its government and drawing out its resources. The Tory portion of its population, very considerable in numbers, and still more so in influence, artfully fomented and effectually aggravated its internal political dissensions, too often turning the hands and hearts of the friends of liberty against each other. To complete the mischief, Arnold was in command at Philadelphia, and at the same time secretly in traitorous correspondence



with the enemy. President Reed, although not then dreaming any more than others of this treason, had the sagacity to discern the profligacy of his character, and encountered all the opposition which his active and powerful malignity could excite. Arnold exerted a disastrous influence in Congress, and to some extent succeeded in casting a shadow between the President of Pennsylvania and the Commander-in-chief. But when, at last, the whole depth of the traitor's depravity was disclosed, justice was done to the patriotic penetration and energy of those who had boldly and faithfully resisted his arbitrary deportment and endeavoured to check his profligate career.

The term of office of President Reed extended beyond the active military struggles of the Revolution, and the services he rendered cannot be overestimated. The following summary gives but a faint idea of his toils and trials.

“ Thus was the Chief Magistrate of the State, in these times of varied responsibility, directing legislation, administering an active executive trust, presiding in the highest court of justice, superintending the recruiting service and the discipline of militia troops, — occasionally, as will be seen, taking the command in person, and leading them to the field, — and all this amidst the fury of party conflict, and in the agony of a civil and an Indian war. Little, indeed, is it to be wondered at that the overtaken spirit broke at last under the burden; for at this time, it must be remembered, that Mr. Reed was not forty years of age. Five years later, he was in his grave.” — Vol. II., p. 178.

After the war, in the hope of recruiting his exhausted strength, and arresting his declining health, he visited England; but it was too late. The following is the inscription over his tomb.

“ In memory  
Of the virtues, talents, and eminent services of  
GENERAL JOSEPH REED.  
Born in the State of New Jersey  
On the 27th August, 1741,  
He devoted himself to the pursuit of knowledge,  
And early engaged in the study of the law;  
By his erudition, learning, and eloquence,  
He soon rose to the highest eminence at the bar;  
But at the call of his country,  
Forsaking all private pursuits, he followed her

Standard to the field of battle,  
 And by his wisdom in council and conduct in action  
 Essentially promoted the Revolution in America.  
 Distinguished by his many public virtues,  
 He was, on the 1st December, 1778, unanimously elected  
 President of this State.  
 Amidst the most difficult and trying scenes, his administration  
 Exhibited disinterested zeal, firmness, and decision.  
 In private life,  
 Accomplished in his manners, pure in his morals,  
 Fervent and faithful in all his attachments,  
 He was beloved and admired.  
 On the 5th of March, 1785,  
 Too soon for his country and his friends, he closed  
 A life, active, useful, and glorious."

— Vol. II., p 416.

Mrs. Reed died in September, 1780. Her loss was irreparable, and, coöperating with the pressure and burden of public cares and patriotic solitudes, hastened his own descent into the grave. The last child of General Reed, born May 26th, 1780, was named George Washington. Largely as we have already drawn upon the work before us, we cannot refrain from making the following extract. We wish to insert upon our pages an example of heroism and self-devotion, which must be allowed to be one of the brightest and most truly glorious passages in the naval annals of our country.

"In General Washington's letter of the 4th of June, he thanked Mr. Reed for naming after him 'The Young Christian.' This was George Washington Reed, whose brief career, so far as it was public, is not without interest. He was thoroughly educated, and, after being graduated at Princeton College, in 1798, entered the navy of the United States, as a midshipman. He was soon promoted, and in 1803 was lieutenant of the Nautilus schooner, under the command of Richard Somers, and attached to Preble's squadron, before Tripoli. Lieutenant Reed was in command of the Nautilus in the attack of the 28th of August, and is referred to with high praise by the Commodore in his official account of that affair. On the night of the 4th of September, Somers undertook the perilous enterprise of entering the harbour of Tripoli, on board the fire-ketch Intrepid. Its mysterious and fatal result is well known.

"'It was eight o'clock,' says the biographer of Somers, 'in

the evening, before the *Intrepid* lifted her anchor; the *Argus*, *Vixen*, *Nautilus*, weighing, and standing in, in company. The night was sufficiently advanced to cover the movement, and all four vessels stood towards the rocks, under their canvas. The last person who left the ketch was Lieutenant Washington Reed, then first of the *Nautilus*. This officer did not quit his Commander, until it was thought necessary for him to rejoin the vessel of which he was now in charge. When he went over the side of the *Intrepid*, all communication between the gallant spirits she contained, and the rest of the world, ceased. At that time every thing seemed propitious; Somers was cheerful, though calm; and perfect order and method prevailed in the little craft. The leave-taking was affectionate and serious with the officers, though the common men appeared to be in high spirits. This was about 9, p. m. The *Argus* and *Vixen* lay off at a little distance from the rocks to attack the galleys or gun-boats, should either attempt to follow the party out in their retreat, while the *Nautilus* shortened sail, and accompanied the ketch, as close in as was deemed prudent, with the especial intention of bringing off the boats. Lieutenant Reed directed the present Commodore Ridgely, then one of the *Nautilus*'s midshipmen, to watch the ketch's movements, with a night-glass; and as this order was strictly complied with, it is almost certain that this officer was the last person of the American squadron who saw the vessel. She seemed to be advancing slowly.' In a few minutes later, the ketch exploded under the batteries of Tripoli, and the fate of Somers and the gallant crew was darkened for ever. Somers, Decatur, Reed, and Stewart, the actors and anxious spectators of the doings of that night, were Philadelphia sailors. But one of them now survives.

"Lieutenant Reed accompanied General Eaton's detachment to the coast of Africa, and served on board the vessel which co-operated with him on that romantic expedition.

"When war was declared against England, Mr. Reed having then been promoted to the grade of Commander, though in extremely delicate health, solicited active service and took command of the *Vixen* brig-of-war of 12 guns, then fitting for sea in one of our eastern ports. Whilst on a cruise in the West Indies, the *Vixen* was captured by the Southampton frigate of 32 guns, commanded by Sir James Lucas Yeo. On the night of the capture, both vessels, being under heavy press of sail, were almost simultaneously wrecked on one of the Bahama keys. The *Vixen* sank so rapidly, that the prize crew barely had time to save their lives; the American prisoners having been previously transferred to the Southampton. On board the frigate, a scene

of great disorder occurred; the British sailors broke into the spirit-room, and defied all control on the part of their officers, and it was only by the aid of the American prisoners, officers and men, that the mutiny was suppressed.

"On arriving at Jamaica, Sir James Yeo publicly returned thanks for the assistance thus rendered, and at once offered Captain Reed his parole. This was declined, on the ground that he would under no circumstances leave his officers and crew, among whom the disease of the climate had already made its appearance, and over whom their commander, himself destined to be its earliest victim, watched with the most affectionate solicitude. Every day, in all the extremity of the climate, he repaired from Spanishtown to Kingston, to be with and relieve the wants of his men. The exposure soon produced its ordinary results, and he was attacked by a tropical fever. His constitution, never very robust, soon yielded, and on the 4th of January, 1813, he died at the early age of thirty-three." — Vol. II., pp. 230 – 232.

We do not overstate the value of these volumes, but indicate their peculiar excellence, when we say that they will be perused with greater interest in proportion to the previous amount of information the reader may possess of the Revolutionary era; and if he is wholly ignorant of the events and characters belonging to it, they are, perhaps, of all others, what we should first place in his hands. The biographer has shown equal wisdom and modesty in allowing his hero and those associated with him to occupy the stage, not appearing himself but at infrequent intervals and for brief periods, where connecting links and explanatory remarks are needed to sustain and illustrate the narrative.

Much that we had intended to reserve to the conclusion, commendatory of the work and of its preëminent historical interest and value, has been incidentally anticipated in the notice we have compiled from it of the life and character of its subject. There is but one point upon which we would suggest a criticism upon the composition of these volumes. It is a criticism to which several recent works, of the highest value in all other respects, are open. In the notes and in the body of the work, passages are introduced in foreign languages, and unaccompanied by translations. For this practice we can imagine no recommendations, while objections to it are obvious and great. It surely cannot be designed or desired to limit the readers of valuable works to that class

of persons who are familiar with other languages than their own. Sometimes, where questions of construction may occur, or any circumstances attach importance or interest especially to the mere phraseology of a passage or document, it may be proper to give it in the original; but even then a translation might well accompany it. Foreigners, who read the work at all in its English dress, of course are not particularly accommodated by a sentence here and there in their own language, while the vast majority of readers are disappointed and provoked by being excluded from instruction and entertainment, often at points where their curiosity is most excited, and by having the current of their thoughts suddenly intercepted by barriers they cannot break through. It becomes, in effect, a sort of discourtesy on the part of the writer to the great bulk of his readers. We would promote to any practicable extent the study of the modern and the ancient languages, but must protest against excluding from the full enjoyment of our own literature all who have not the means of becoming familiar with them. To mix up in our best books French and Spanish, German and Italian, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, or any other languages, is a violation of the dignity of our own tongue. The English language is destined to spread over both hemispheres, and has a surer prospect of ultimately becoming universal than any ever uttered by man. The world-embracing conquests and dependencies of Great Britain have given it prevalence in a large portion of the older continents, and the northern latitudes of this. It is advancing over America with the expanding boundaries of our Union. The commerce, navigation, enterprise, philanthropy, and superior political institutions of the two leading nations of the earth, occupying a controlling position on each side of the globe, are carrying it to all the islands of the sea, and extending it along all shores. We may confidently believe that the literature it bears on its bosom will find continually multiplying readers in all lands. Let our writers be just to its claims and its dignity; and let them be just to themselves, by securing to the widest extent the field it is thus ever opening and expanding before them.